



May 12, 2010

House Judiciary Committee  
Lansing, Michigan

Re: Public Notification Package

Dear Representatives,

The Michigan Environmental Council (MEC) is an umbrella group of more than seventy environmental, conservation and faith-based groups located across the state. We are aware of the financial pressures on state and local governments. These financial pressures are shared by individuals and families across the state. However, we are concerned about the impact of the proposed bills to eliminate the requirement to post public notices in newspapers will have on communities across the state and especially low-income residents.

Although the day may come, computer ownership and Internet access is far from uniform and would put low-income residents of the state at a disadvantage when it comes to participation in decision making in our communities and dealing with the impacts of those decisions. A recent study of low-income households showed computer ownership by those households in Detroit is around 42%, and statewide numbers only slightly higher at 54%. Only a portion of those who own computer have access to the Internet due to the significant monthly charges. Budget cuts at libraries have also reduced access to computers outside the home.

Zoning decisions, site plans, variances and new or amended ordinances would all be subject to these reduced notice provisions, with potential significant impacts to low-income communities. A 2007 study showed that of 413 hazardous waste facilities located in the United States, the proportion of people of color in the host community is almost twice that of non-host communities. This package is a step in the wrong direction to address this injustice.

MEC opposes this package, and will do so until the state and local units of government can demonstrate that they have involved low-income communities in decision making in a meaningful way, and the disparity in access to information has been addressed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Clift", written over the word "Sincerely,".

James Clift, Policy Director